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Sen. Gilbert applauds president's dedication to cleaning up local lakes and rivers

Lansing – Sen. Jud Gilbert (R-Algonac) is encouraged by President George W. Bush's efforts to clean up the Great Lakes and surrounding waters, including the St. Clair River.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced last week that the president will ask Congress for \$45 million for Great Lakes cleanup in his 2005 budget, more than quadruple the amount in this year's budget. The money in the Great Lakes Legacy Act would be used to start or accelerate cleanup of contaminated rivers and harbors that have been designated as areas of concern.

"I'm glad to hear of the president's commitment to our local waters," Gilbert said. "The St. Clair River has been designated as an area of concern and I'd like to see it off the list as soon as possible. Protecting our residents from the harmful chemicals in the water is a high priority."

According to the EPA's Web site, the St. Clair River cleanup priorities include contaminated sediment remediation on the Canadian side of the river, elimination of spills from "Chemical Valley" and ensuring proper notification when spills do occur.

"Eliminating chemical spills and proper notification is a main concern in the Blue Water area, especially after yet another spill occurred this past weekend," Gilbert said.

Approximately 42,000 gallons of toxic chemicals leaked into the St. Clair River from Chemical Valley.

Several communities along the St. Clair River rely on the river as their primary source of drinking water, while local industries need high quality water for their operations, and ships carrying cargo between the upper and lower Great Lakes travel the St. Clair River.

(More)

Forty-three areas of concern have been identified: 26 located entirely within the United States, 12 located wholly within Canada and five that are shared by both countries.

The budget also seeks an additional \$3 million for the Great Lakes Program for restoration projects and an additional \$1 million for research into the control of invasive species such as the zebra mussel and Asian carp that plague the Great Lakes.

“Cleaning up the rivers and lakes is an important step to protect this natural resource for future generations to enjoy,” Gilbert said.

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